

"LOGCHIPS
ON THE WAY"

HISTORY
of the
689th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
in the
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS



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INTRODUCTION

This is the story of the march of the 689th Field Artillery Battalion (nicknamed "Fabins" - Field Artillery Battalion - and known as "Logchips" in telephone language) from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to Bayrischzell, Germany, in the heart of the Alps. The name "Fabins" was given to the Battalion by Sergeant Lewis and Corporal Ellis, Headquarters Battery, while the Battalion was stationed at Camp Iron Mountain, California.

The following pages have been compiled from all available information and from the memory of those who assisted in writing and editing this booklet. We are indebted to Major Job for most of the pictures. Dates, in some cases, may be slightly erroneous, and if that is so, the error was unintentional.

Probably many other points of interest should have been included, in order to give a more complete picture of the activities of the 689th Field Artillery Battalion in World War II. However, those of us who have assembled this information and put it together in booklet form, hope that it is accurate enough and contains enough of the highlights that many other experiences will be recalled.

We hope you are pleased with the booklet. If you are not -- don't complain to us because our headaches were many and the hours long in its preparation. Probably no other editions will be published, so additions or corrections cannot be made. It has been a pleasure to prepare the booklet and we hope you are satisfied.

TO THE ENLISTED MEN AND OFFICERS OF THE
689TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

December 20, 1947

When it comes to writing a few words here to show my appreciation for your efforts during the time we spent together, I find myself thinking of many happy and pleasant associations.

The spirit in which everyone entered into the job of preparing for combat was indeed of great gratification to those of us responsible for the activities and training of the battalion. In preparing for the AGF tests, I remember how, even in the "dry runs", everyone put forth his best efforts.

Our experiences on the desert in Southern California were varied and I believe that everyone was glad to board the train and head east. Then, too, we knew that our training time was about up and soon we would be heading for a theater of operations. It seemed that everyone was anxious to get in the thick of it and get the job done. With the knowledge of this thorough and complete training, I was always confident that we would give a good account of ourselves. The commendations that are printed in this booklet speak for themselves and prove this out.

It was a pleasure and a privilege to command the 689th through its entire combat participation in World War II. I want to wish all of you the best of luck in the years to come and hope that you will find the type of life that you dreamed of as we fought side by side in the battle for freedom.

George C. Merkel

George C. Merkel
Lieutenant Colonel, FA
Commanding



LIEUTENANT COLONEL GEORGE C. MERKEL

IN MEMORIAM

Private First Class Charles Draz
Service Battery
Killed by enemy artillery fire at Hettange
Grande, France, on or about November 6, 1944.

First Sergeant Billy J. Mileham
Headquarters Battery
Killed by enemy artillery fire near Kemplich,
France, on or about November 18, 1944.

Private First Class William A. Crowell
Headquarters Battery
Killed by enemy artillery fire at Kell,
Germany, on or about March 16, 1945.

Technician Fourth Grade Oscar J. Emmett
Headquarters Battery
Wounded by enemy artillery fire at Kell,
Germany, on or about March 16, 1945, and died
at a General Hospital on or about April 4, 1945.

Second Lieutenant Robert E. Moore
Air Observer - "C" Battery
Shot down and killed by enemy machine gun
fire while on an observing mission near
Roden, Germany, on or about April 11, 1945.

ORIGIN
OF THE
689TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

The 689th Field Artillery Battalion was a regular army unit, formerly known as the 3d Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment. This regiment was composed of horse drawn 75 mm guns. It has a history dating back to the 5th Field Artillery Regiment and the Revolutionary War.

As a part of the 18th Field Artillery Regiment, the 3d Battalion (689th) saw action in France during World War I. It participated in the Champagne-Marne, Aisne-Marne, St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne operations. The French government cited the regiment in Corps orders for services rendered on the Marne and during the subsequent advance towards the Vesle in July 1918, from positions southeast of Chateau Thierry to northeast of Presnes. At the completion of the war the unit remained in Europe as a part of the Army of Occupation. In 1922, it was moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where it remained until World War II.

In June 1940, the Battalion was officially designated the 3d Battalion, 18th Field Artillery Regiment, and its armament became truck drawn medium artillery (155 mm Schneider Howitzers).

At Fort Sill the unit served as school troops. As such, it furnished troops and equipment to the Field Artillery School for educational and training purposes. In March 1943, the regiment was inactivated, in name only, and the 3d Battalion became a separate battalion known as the 689th Field Artillery Battalion.

LOGCHIPS ON THE WAY

PRELUDE TO BATTLE

Preparation

In the summer of 1943, the battalion was relieved of most of its school duties and our efforts were turned to preparation for the Army Ground Force (AGF) tests. After what seemed to be endless "dry runs" and inspections, movement orders were received for us to leave Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Secrecy was the word, and only a very few knew our destination. On October 6, 1943, the 689th departed from Fort Sill.

On October 10th, we arrived at an unloading platform (Freida) in the middle of a desert in southern California. After a short truck ride we found ourselves to be in Camp Iron Mountain.

Then began an intensive training and hardening up program. The prime movers of the battalion were changed from Diamond T's to tractors. Here we ran into our first act of sabotage. The twelfth tractor drawn had filings in the crank case. Six of these tractors were with us when the war ended.

Our objective on the desert was to pass the AGF tests. After a two weeks maneuver in November, and many trial runs, we were finally put through our paces and given the firing tests in December 1943. On December 24th, we successfully completed the final firing test and were pronounced ready for combat.

Colonel Merkel (then Major) assumed command of the battalion in December 1943 and remained in command until July 1945, when the battalion personnel was reorganized for redeployment.

On February 27, 1944, we left Camp Iron Mountain and proceeded by train to the sultry, heat-laden confines of Camp Polk, Louisiana. We were to wait here for movement orders to a theater of operations. Having been sent from California to Louisiana we were guessing that our combat duty was to be performed in Europe. There were those cynics, however, who thought that they had mastered army routing to the extent that

they were willing to give odds of 2 to 1 that our duty would be in the Pacific.

At Polk the full field inspections of clothing and equipment occupied the greatest portion of the time and effort spent there. Air-ground tests were taken in the maneuver area where we learned about low flying fighters. The clothes were all but worn to a high degree of unserviceability from the constant handling by the men and inspecting officers. The officers were schooled to the teeth, and the men were drilled, trained, and knocked about in the bull pen, until all were in fine fettle and ready for the rigorous life of an artillery battalion overseas.

On April 12, 1944, a forward party composed of Major Rappe, Mister Lehman, and Sgt. Lewis departed for places unknown via New York City. The battalion was alerted for movement on April 19th, but a last minute change in plans cancelled the alert orders. Our tractors, however, were shipped to Cardiff, Wales, where we picked them up in August 1944.



Our Prime Mover - The M-5 Tractor

This last minute delay caused everyone to be granted a last 7 days plus travel time furlough or leave. These trips took the members of the battalion to all parts of the United States, with Oklahoma claiming the lion's share.

Movement Orders Arrive

Then dawned the day of departure. To quote the morning report: "Thursday, 22 June 1944, departed station 1850, enroute to an undisclosed destination; mode of travel by rail. Friday, 23 June 1944, arrived at Texarkana, Arkansas, 0630; left Texarkana, 0705; morale excellent. Saturday, 24 June 1944, arrived Chattanooga, Tennessee 0745; departed 0830. Ten minutes of calisthenics one mile east of Knoxville. Morale excellent. Monday, 26 June 1944, arrived New Haven, Connecticut, 0910; departed 1005. Arrived 1350, usual camp duties." This account describes in official language the very enjoyable trip through some of our nation's most beautiful sections from Polk to Camp Miles Standish just outside of Taunton, Massachusetts. So the Fabins detrained, excellent morale and all, to polish off their preparations for an overseas movement in the highly efficient port of embarkation at Standish.

This stage of the game was a cinch. Everything was set up to a T and the kinks had long since been worked out of the program on the numerous outfits that had preceded ours. All one had to do was exactly as he had been told. Any items short? See the supply sergeant and he'd fix that with little or no paper work. An amusing incident occurred during one of these inspections, when one of the men made the remark: "If you have two - turn one in; if you have one - draw one." Nothing to it at all, and the whole Battalion was ready to sail.

The Fabins on the High Seas

And that, too, was a snap; even the duffle bags were lined up in ranks of three, tagged, numbered and ready for loading. Just stand in line and you could not miss. After a short train ride to the dock, the Fabins detrained to see a huge grey wall of steel staring them in the face. Fortified with coffee and doughnuts from the Red Cross, the men single

filed their civilian problems away as they made their way into the bowels of the ship through the passageway through the wall of steel.

This was on the first day of July 1944, and the ship was the Wakefield, formerly the luxury liner Manhattan. Twenty-four hours elapsed before sailing, and that was ample time for the men and officers to settle in the compartments and rest from carrying heavy luggage aboard. This also gave time to speculate; Iceland? Scotland? England? submarines? Would we pick up the escort vessels out in the harbor? Finally, the ship was completely loaded and ready to sail. All but one item, that is, the whistle had to be tested. "Now hear this," boomed the loudspeakers all over the ship. "Now hear this: At 0700 there will be a whistle test." And at 0700 there was a whistle test and the whole ship reverberated with the deep tones of the ship's whistle trying out its voice.

Just how this whistle practice and the daylight sailing fit in with the training films on the secrecy of ships' movements we'd seen was hard to understand. Furthermore, we soon discovered that there would be no escort vessels. Everything seemed to be exactly opposite to those things we had been shown and told in camp. But our ship was a good one and a fast one and could outrun any submarine--it said in fine print. At 0800, 2 July 1944, we started to draw our overseas pay. As the ship left Boston harbor, lumps came to throats and apprehension filled the hearts of all present.

It would be a task out of reason to consolidate all the events of interest aboard ship. The battalion was split into various sections of the boat and even mess arrangements did not allow the outfit to retain its individuality. The boys were thrown in with a bunch of undisciplined paratroopers whose affairs involved some few of the Fabins, and the brig became their place of abode. But of general interest may be mentioned the long hours of daylight. Truly we lived in the realms of the midnight sun, and those who experienced mal de mer were constantly thanking their lucky stars that the sea was comparatively calm during the entire journey. Not a few, however, expended their energy over the rail at "C" deck aft.

For company and relief of the monotony of an endless ocean we had an occasional plane on routine patrol and a school

or two of gamboling porpoises. Aboard ship were the usual nightly gatherings around the crap table or the pasteboards. Hundreds of dollars changed hands each day of the trip. And the regular bull sessions were augmented by the music of a fair band made up of the boys of the ship's crew.

We didn't know there was so much water in the whole world! Long days and always short nights; we sailed and nothing to see but greenish water. Those who had always wanted to travel became confirmed home bodies from that trip on.

Land Ahead

Finally, came the day when land was sighted and the ship anchored outside the port at Liverpool, England. Spirits rose and hopes were high, ahead lay land and a few days--weeks?--in Great Britain offered varied possibilities. So on the tenth day of July the Fabins set foot once more on solid earth, lined up with duffle bags and waited for another train ride to "an undisclosed destination".

After a speedy ride under the Mersey River and through the greenest fields, we slid into a station bearing the impossible name, "Abergavenny". There, once again, we met the forward party that had preceded the outfit to England some two months before. We learned that we were assigned to the Third Army and attached to the 12th Corps. A short ride in trucks, driving on the wrong side of the street, took us to a British constructed camp with a Welsh name of Court-Y-Gollen, the pronunciation of which is impossible to Yankee tongues. After arrival at Camp one of the batteries discovered that it had left its records on the train. A vigorous and determined search failed to locate the missing records.

At Court-Y-Gollen the Fabins shared the area with a herd of fat sheep; had their first experience with British plumbing, whereby a pull of the chain removed all evidence and gave one a shower all at the same time; and many bought bicycles. Supplies poured in from all over the Empire and officers and vehicles were constantly on the go to far-flung cities to insure the complete supply of pencils and grid sheets. Time was found amidst the sessions of infantry tactics and conditioning marches to put in a couple of service practices on a

large, grassy range where sheep led a very precarious existence--often times substituting for targets. The most memorable event at this stage of the training was the fact that the OP was twice bracketed by our own friendly elements supposedly firing on another range.

Good old American dollars and cents were converted into brain twisting pounds, shillings, and pence about this time. This made it possible for the men and officers to partake of the wares and pleasures of nearby Crickhowell, Abergavenny, Bryn Mawr, and other nearby towns. Several made trips to nearby castle ruins. On two such occasions, Mr. Ivor Lindsey, the Crickhowell schoolmaster, vividly told us the history connected with each castle that we visited.



Raglan Castle - Near Abergavenny

The nightly convoys and bicycle trips were always good for several hours of interesting conversation. The Fabin band proved of worth in melting many a Welsh lassie to a state of congeniality, and the parties where the band played were always a success.

All the time preparations were being made for a short sea voyage under the direction of the 177th F.A. Group. The 12th Corps SOP was studied and mastered to a high degree of efficiency. Major General Cook, 12th Corps Commander, and Brigadier General Lentz, 12th Corps Artillery Commander, visited us on several occasions to orient us on our combat mission. Supplies continued to come in from all points in the United Kingdom; racks were put on vehicles; and other necessary functions performed. The time came when all the belongings, organizational and personal, were loaded--squeezed--into the trucks and a march made out of the camp to ascertain whether or not all the stuff would remain on the vehicles, or leave a trail of supplies all along the road. A few of these marches were made. A bare minimum of equipment was lost, and on the last trip (August 18th), we did not return to camp. Instead we kept on going, riding all day long, ending up in the staging area at Southampton. "A" Battery threw a track on a prime mover as we entered this bee-hive of activity. This caused no end of frustration and comments by the MP's, who were forced to direct traffic around this road block.

Short Sea Voyage

Southampton--port of embarkation. Apprehension filled the minds of all, it wouldn't be long now and we'd be in it up to our necks. To add to the discomfort, vomit bags, louse powder, emergency rations, and other bric-a-brac were issued to each and every man. Battery Commanders sat up till the wee hours of the morning converting British money into French francs to usher in the final note of confusion, and all we had to do from then on was sweat it out.

The sweating out did not last long. Early in the morning of the second day (Saturday, August 19th) at the Southampton staging area the loudspeaker blared forth with: "A and B Batteries report to your vehicles at once and prepare to move out!" The moment was here! Long months of preparation for this moment, and now the time had come to go. A march through a very heavy rain failed to add any comfort to the situation, and the tediously long wait at the dock before the last vehicle was finally hoisted aboard ship didn't help any.

The battalion had been split and was loaded on two vessels. Able and Baker batteries boarded the John S. Mosby, while the remainder of the outfit shipped on the Jane Long. The trip across the channel was uneventful, rather calm, but uncomfortable. Frequent rains, constant diet of "C" rations, and cramped quarters contributed to the discomfort of all.

The two vessels anchored off the shore of Utah Beach Sunday evening (August 20th) and landing barges and "rhinos" immediately started the unloading process. At times the sea was choppy and Diamond T's whirled in the air on the winch cables; trucks hit the barges with a great thud and bounced high into the air. Finally, four days later, the job was done and the Fabins were all officially ashore at 1430, 24 August 1944. The battalion was reorganized in transient Area "B", Field Number 24. Capt. Weston, S-2, was ordered to locate the 195th F.A. Group, to which we had been attached for combat. In transient Area "B" foxholes were dug and several of the members of the battalion unearthed various members of dead enemy bodies. Also visits were made to a nearby burial plot where several bodies of Yankee paratroopers grimly brought close to home the realities of war for the very first time.

NORTHERN FRANCE

The Rat Race Begins

At 0700, 25 August, the battalion moved out of Area "B" into a bivouac area near St. Mars, which is located approximately eight miles north of Ernee. Here we learned that all our study and memorization and practice of the XII Corps SOP was to no avail; for we were now under jurisdiction of the XX Corps also of the Third Army, and the SOP of this outfit was, as yet, unknown to us. At that location many of the Fabins learned through sad experience that Calvados is, in truth, stronger than beer. Also, it was here that Capt. Green and the battalion maintenance section ventured toward the town of Reenes, only to be overtaken and informed that the town was still occupied by German troops.

The following day, the battalion reached the Third Army assembly area and went into a bivouac area three miles west of Cloyes. From here they went to another bivouac two miles west of Nemours. On 28 August the battalion caught up with its attached group, the 195th FA Group, which was in bivouac four miles west of Nogent at a town named Herme. That night the Group moved to a bivouac located four miles northeast of Mont Mort.

During the march two enemy planes buzzed the column and cold fear entered the hearts of most of the men. This was the first possibility of coming face to face with the destructive powers of the enemy, and the uncertainty added to the feeling of fear. Blackout lights were extinguished, and machine guns were racked back in readiness, but nothing happened, and the column moved along in normal shape. On 29 August 1944, the battalion moved into its first firing position along highway GC 9 and 800 to 900 yards south of the town of Constantine,

located one and one half miles south of the Marne River. There was no firing from this position.

Next day the battalion pulled out of position, crossed the Marne, and marched to Puisieux and went into another bivouac. From this location we could see the towers of the Cathedral at Reims. On this date, the battalion captured its first prisoners. The rear elements of Service Battery captured one German officer and four enlisted men. Two two and one-half ton enemy vehicles were captured on the same day. At 2220, on 31 August, the battalion moved from Puisieux to a bivouac area at Jouy, located six miles west of Verdun.

This night march created extra excitement which was due to the fact that we had cut a German Panzer Division in two the night before and they were madly trying to consolidate themselves. Our batteries were laid in three different directions in order that we could shoot at any point to our front, rear or sides. This was indeed unusual, because some of our Howitzers were laid directly to our rear in the direction of our own troops. The battalion air sections of the Group had a rough time that morning as they attempted to join their units. As they flew low over what they supposed was friendly territory they passed over the isolated German troops who opened fire on them and at least two planes were shot down. Our own battalion planes had a narrow escape, but came through safe and sound.

Enemy aircraft dropped flares in the general vicinity of the battalion area and friendly anti-aircraft units filled the sky with their projectiles. This incident was impressive enough to cause widespread digging. Picks and shovels were heard frantically punching out foxholes for the greatest part of the night. The next night enemy planes flew low over the position and our own "ack ack", namely, Phillips of "A" Battery, fired a total of 208 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition. The Fabins were now at war!

On 1 September the battalion moved from Jouy into a defensive firing position southeast of Fromerville. At this time the 195th Group was in general support of the 5th Infantry Division in their crossing of the Meuse River at Verdun, and the widening of the bridgehead made by the crossing of the 7th Armored Division. Still no firing.

The outfit moved from one defensive position to another. Forward observers were even sent out and an observation post set up in Fort de Dugny. On the 6th of September, after sufficient gasoline had been obtained for a few more miles travel, the unit crossed the Meuse River to a new defensive position near Ville. From there it went to a position near Fleville.



Our Primary weapon

The 155 mm (M-1) Howitzer (Medium Artillery)

We Fire

On the following day, 8 September 1944, the Fabins fired! Charlie Battery had just gone into position and was ready to fire. As yet the battalion had not fired a round in combat, and we were beginning to think the war would be over before we had a chance to fire. However, we soon found out otherwise; for Lt. Smith came running up to the "Exec Post" with a Major from the XX Corps. Major Elkins, Ass't. S-3, XX Corps Artillery, spotted Capt. Lake and asked him if the battalion was ready to shoot.

Of course the Fabins are always ready to fire! The answer was "Yes". The Major then told us that he had communication with a plane that had spotted from three to seven German tanks in the woods about 5000 yards in front of us. We set up a small FDC at the guns and then asked the plane if he was ready to observe. The plane asked for our location and when we had given it to him, he told us to fire. As soon as the round had left the tube, every telephone in the battery started to ring. The S-3, Major Job, and his crew wanted to know what the hell was going on, and what we were shooting at. After a long conversation we finally satisfied him by promising to send him the adjusted coordinates of the target, the number of rounds fired, and the effect on the target, and other miscellaneous information; all of which an S-3 thrives on. When the mission was completed, we had knocked out two of the tanks and dispersed the others. The Fabins were no longer "virgins". We had fired our first combat mission!

Excitement reigned within the area when a report was received that the 90th Division Artillery CP had been overrun by German tanks. It is believed that the tanks fired upon by "C" Battery were the ones that had overrun this CP. The 204th FA Group assumed the duties of the Division Artillery for about two days, at which time the 90th Division Artillery was again able to function.

Krauts in the Woods

Shortly after Charlie had fired their mission word was received that a Group officer had been fired upon by a sniper. A call went down to all batteries for a scouting party of 20 men per battery to report to the CP. Word got around that they were to comb a small wooded knoll in front of the positions for snipers, and everyone wanted to go in hopes that they would get a shot at a Kraut. When the parties from all the batteries had reported to the CP, they were given instructions by the Battalion Exec and started off on the double. Some groups were more cautious than others and almost crawled through the area on their stomachs in order to present smaller targets to any Heinie lying in wait, while other groups went dashing madly through the woods, laughing and shouting. Every once in a while everything would become silent, and a brave soul would

crawl forward to investigate some clump of bushes that looked suspicious--only to find that there was nothing there. After the woods had been thoroughly combed the groups returned to their batteries, slightly disappointed at not finding anything to shoot at.

The same day that the Howitzers made their debut into the French campaign, the battalion was assigned the mission, along with the rest of the Group, of general support of the 90th Infantry Division in their attempt to seize a bridgehead east of the Moselle River and to capture Thionville and Metz. This was the first time we had worked with the 90th. We learned at this early date to respect the capabilities and powers of this great division, and from that time on complete confidence was felt whenever we were assigned to support the 90th Division.

The forward observers "sweat out" their first assignment about this time when Captain Schurtz, S-2, took Lt. G. T. Smith and Lt. Good to an Infantry battalion of the 90th Division and turned them over to the doughs for indoctrination. They were directed to a Company CP at Fontoy, and there they saw their first "good" Germans, which had been freshly killed that morning in the fighting for the town. The Company Commander oriented the new observers on the trials and tribulations of forward observers assigned to his Company and then they took off for the front line squads. Fortunately, the doughs were not meeting much resistance and the observers found themselves going up hill and down dale as fast as they could go in order to stay up with their unit. After climbing three of the steepest hills that it had ever been their misfortune to see, they reached a position where they could obtain observation on the objective--Thionville.

The observers were there and ready to go, but the 610 radios were not; and down in the valley were two enemy guns inviting Yankee shell fire. By using "walkie-talkie" radios to the 610's, they finally got the data to the FDC and the Fabins carved another notch in the Howitzer trails to record their start towards a ruinous career for all enemy materiel.

RHINELAND (1ST PHASE)

The Fortress of Metz

From this position the battalion moved from place to place and on 12 September it was relieved from the 195th Group and assigned to the 5th FA Group, and a move was made to Jouaville, (near Doncourt) where the mission of the battalion was general support of the 5th Infantry Division, which was to attempt to capture the fortified positions west of Metz.

Observation posts were established in a school house at St. Privet and Malmaison; many of the outfit will recall these two "hot-spots", for it was here that many had their first lesson on dodging 88 fire. CP jitters were not at all uncommon among the personnel manning these posts. The OP's overlooked some old forts and here the German OCS boys gave the Yanks some rather stiff opposition.

At the St. Privet OP the Headquarters Battery survey section, led by Lt. Simpson and Sgt. Krummel performed an outstanding sleuthing job when they found the German OCS solution to the capture of Metz. This information was immediately transmitted to higher headquarters.

Two days later the battalion was again attached to the 195th FA Group and again supported the 90th Division. It was on this same day that the first Purple Hearts were awarded to men of the outfit. Lt. Guy and Cpl. Harold N. Stewart, both of "Baker" battery were the wounded men; nothing fatal, but from that day on they knew that the war was being played for keeps and that it was not just another maneuver.

It was in this position, also, that shells passed over the battalion area and exploded in an area where an air base

was being made. This was the first time for this sort of thing. There were other firsts here, too, but of lesser military importance; namely, the first movie was shown the outfit, and the first showers were taken since landing on French soil.

On the 23d of September the battalion crossed the Moselle River and went into position above Vittonville. The positions were on high ground, and "A" battery learned to their



3rd Section, Battery "A"
17 Dec. 1944 - Gongelfang, France
Falkner, DeLello, Becker, Stoker, Wade, Bissonette
(L to R)

sorrow that bulldozing out a position for each piece did not pay dividends. The rainy season really started about this time, and the mud around the pieces became a major problem. We were again with the 5th Group, as of this date, and were supporting the 7th Armored Division.

Many will remember the numerous duds that the Krauts shot over our heads in their efforts to knock out the pontoon

bridge across the Moselle. Some will recall the two or three Kraut planes which flew low over the trees rimming the position area in a daylight reconnaissance flight. Some will also recall the first view of the grand old city of Metz that they had from the ridge in front of the positions. But all will remember the mud; the deep, sticky mud that the gunners had to fight day and night; the impassable mud that the trucks had to contend with up a steep grade. This was the beginning of a long siege of the stuff, and there is not a Fabin that does not welcome good old dry dust on the roads.

This position afforded the battalion its best opportunity for ground observed counter battery missions. On one day over 700 rounds were fired on these missions. Also, we had ring side seats to the P-47 bombing missions on the forts surrounding Metz.

Mail Arrives

The first mail to be received by the battalion since leaving England arrived while we were at Vittonville. The battalion had been registered with every APO in the vicinity and for some reason no mail was being received. Finally in sheer desperation Lt. Cunningham was sent on a mission to the rear with orders to find the mail.

Soon after he left eight bags of mail arrived and Corporal Hulse, M/Sgt. Pense and the battery mail clerks (and many willing volunteers) worked late into the night sorting and delivering mail. Two days later another large mail delivery was received. It was estimated that over 30,000 letters were received by the battalion while in this position. From then on the mail service was excellent. Cpl. Hulse and the battery mail clerks are to be congratulated on having done such a fine job in keeping the best morale builder of all coming to us at all times.

On To Luxembourg

From Vittonville the battalion re-crossed the Moselle and went up into Luxembourg to help out the 83rd Infantry

Division. The battalion CP set up in a basement of a house in its initiation into "chateau warfare" just coming in vogue about this time. Overlooking Metz the CP had outranked Captain Lake out of an old fort and had used that for their own, but here in the beautiful country of Luxembourg was the first time that the CP took to a house, and it marked the turn of events. From that time on efforts were made to house as many of the men as possible, and the CP never went into the field again until the following spring.

While the battalion was in position at Welfrange, several V-2 rockets were seen rising high into the sky on their westward journey. Several seconds later the rushing sound could be heard by troops on the ground. It was SOP to rush out with a compass or aiming circle to obtain an azimuth of these projectiles. Little satisfaction came from these readings, for the thing was invisible for a great portion of its trajectory before the white smoke which characterized its trail could be seen.

From the OP's the reinforced concrete dragon's teeth of the intensely fortified and defended Saar-Moselle switchline could be seen. Hundreds of Krauts were dug in very sufficiently in this area as can be vouched for by any of the observers who manned the OP's from which the first ground view into Germany proper was attained.



Dragon's Teeth in Siegfried defenses. Note demolished reinforced concrete machine gun pill-box in background

The "A" Battery OP personnel had an exciting time one day firing on German sunbathers. OP duty, thereafter, while in that position was a very popular assignment. A Red Cross Clubmobile visited us for the first time while we were here. Our small radio enabled us to enjoy some of the World Series baseball games between the St. Louis Browns and the St. Louis Cards. These games were generally heard from about 10:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.

An old friend, Colonel Clay, former commander of the 18th FA Group, paid a visit to the battalion and renewed friendships. He was acting as Division Artillery Executive of the 83d Division at this time, and as such was our commander once again.

In the middle of October the outfit moved back into France and went into position in the outskirts of Hettange Grande. The CP was set up in a French military barracks. We changed groups and missions at this time, being attached to the 193d FA Group.

Due to extended lines of communication the Merkel Groupment was formed, which was composed of the 241st F.A. Bn, the 689th F.A. Bn, and the 609th T.D. Bn. Headquarters for this groupment was at Task Force Polk's headquarters in Thionville.

The mission of the groupment was to support Task Force Polk, which in official language was the 3d Cavalry Group. Due to a critical shortage of ammunition, captured ammunition was being used to a great extent. Certain other limitations placed upon us by higher authorities made the Fabins of very little use to the Cavalry at first, but later events cemented an everlasting friendship and mutual respect between these two outfits.

Several OP's were set up in the Maginot line from which locations we had a broad view of a 17 mile front across the Moselle River. The 241st F.A. Bn rehabilitated the guns in Fort DeThionville and fired many rounds of German ammunition back at the Germans from them.

While at Hettange, the officer personnel of the battalion was changed in most of the batteries. Our first

counterbattery was received while here and the battalion was displaced 4000 yards to the rear. The first death in the battalion occurred during some of this action when Private Draz of Service Battery was killed by enemy shell fire.

As for our firing, the majority was done on registrations, CI's, and the like, in order to obtain some sort of standards for using the Kraut Schneider ammunition. Our own ammunition was reserved for emergencies, such as a counter-attack on the part of the enemy. A detailed firing plan was developed of defensive concentrations and each battery in the Groupment prepared firing data to be used if called for. On 27 October the Groupment was dissolved and the 40th F.A. Group and Harrassing 6 took over.

Special Surprise Night Shoot

With the use of photos furnished by Colonel Polk and intelligence gained from prisoners Major Rappe planned a surprise shoot on a group of French barracks occupied by German soldiers on the east side of the Moselle near Elzange. These barracks were out of range from our present positions and due to lack of defilade, it was impossible to move the battalion into permanent positions closer to the Moselle River. However, after careful air reconnaissance, Colonel Merkel located three small clearings in the Cattenom Forest that could serve as very temporary night positions for the special target. Certain targets in the area were picked out according to their importance and availability to the armament of the Groupment for concentrations.

The Fabins planned the part played by the T.D. Bn and the assault guns of the 3d Cavalry Group. A Center of Impact (CI) was fired in the afternoon and another one at night. During the night CI, the 241st F.A. Bn fired a diversion concentration from Fort DeThionville.

On the night of Halloween, the 31 October after several days of planning and preparation, the three firing batteries displaced four miles forward to the positions in the Cattenom Forest. These positions were only about 1000 yards from the Moselle River. At 0300 on 1st of November, the battalion



Effect of our special night firing on buildings
in barracks area occupied by German troops

opened fire and in 12 minutes dumped a total of 240 rounds of Kraut ammunition on the target. At 0315 the firing batteries under cover of a very dense fog displaced back to their regular positions. After the crossing of the Moselle, the barracks were visited to see the effect of our fire. The effect proved to be excellent.

The fire direction center did an excellent job under trying circumstances in planning and supervising the firing of the battalion. Capt. Dunlap and Lt. Sherry with the Communications sections surmounted tremendous difficulties in maintaining communications at all times.

We Cross the Moselle River

The battalion moved about from place to place; was attached to the 40th FA Group, supported once again the 90th Division. The big problem was to get across the Moselle and resume the offensive once again. All this time, the Cavalry had been holding the river front with troops spread out very thinly, and we had been of some small support with our ammo

limitations. We did find ourselves in good favor with the Cavalry when we fired upon Berg and the hill outside Berg prior to their attack on these places.

It was the capture of Berg and the hill that started the ball rolling on the river crossing and the resultant offensive. The operation on Berg was of major importance in the Third Army plan for the capture of Metz and the forts in the surrounding area. Our mission was to support the 3d Cavalry Group in clearing the Germans from the west side of the Moselle. The mission proved to be exceedingly difficult, and after one unsuccessful attempt, the city of Berg and surrounding high ground was finally overpowered and the mission successfully completed. Concentrations were fired on Berg and the high ground north of the city, which resulted in reducing enemy resistance to a minimum. The Cavalry Group heaped high praises on the work of the forward observers and the support given them by the battalion.

On the 13th of November we became part of the 5th Group and supported the 10th Armored Division. On the 15th of November we crossed the Moselle and positions were taken near Hunting. The main effort of this attack was made by the 90th Division. Lt. Good and his forward observer party led by Sgt. McCaul crossed the Moselle with the leading elements of the 90th and soon penetrated beyond our range. During this attack the Moselle River flooded its banks and washed out all bridges isolating our troops on the east side of the river. These troops were without vehicles and artillery support. After 5 days of feverish waiting the river subsided to the place where it could again be spanned with pontoon bridges.

The 10th Armored then carved a bloody path as far east as Launstroff. "C" Battery was detached from the battalion and assigned to the 558th F.A. Bn., which was supporting the drive of the north column. The remainder of the battalion supported the south column. Enemy mines caused considerable casualties among the tanks and armored vehicles, but numerous prisoners were taken and many more left lying by the roadside. A "C" Battery tractor hit the only mine that we hit during the war. Dame Good Fortune was on hand and there were no serious casualties.

Few will ever forget the events of the 18th of November; how the vehicles were all stuck in the mud near Moneren and 88's started landing all around. We were under direct observation of the enemy. There were no holes to crawl into; no way of going forward or withdrawing to get away from the shelling. All one could do was hope and pray that his vehicle would not get hit nor himself injured. It was on this occasion that 1st Sgt. Billy Mileham in an effort to calm the men of his battery, lost his life. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action. The tractors from "A" Battery finally pulled all the vehicles out of the mud and the battalion went into position near Kemplich. High water again proved to be a major obstacle and our drive was temporarily halted.



Kirsch-les-Sierck, France. Every house had a manure pile at the front door.

Two days later the Fabins moved into Kirsch-les-Sierck for the first time. For a few days we supported the 90th Division and on the 27th of November switched back to the 10th Armored. The battle at this time was toward Sinz, Tettingen, Butzdorf - all towns north of the dragon's teeth and part of the "closed door" or Saar - Moselle Switch Line defenses. The

10th was stopped here. In fact, this area was not cleared until the following spring. Thanksgiving dinner, with plenty of Turkey, was served while we were in this position.

Our next move was to Ritzing on 29th of November. This area proved to be a choice target for enemy counterbattery and road interdiction. A radio broadcast of the Army - Navy football game and a Red Cross Clubmobile furnished recreation and diversion from our combat duties. Many will remember Capt. Smith's belated trip down the stairs during one period of enemy firing. Everyone, except Capt. Smith, who was sound asleep, had headed for the basement when the shells began to come in. An exceptionally close shell came in and awakened him - down the stairs he came and burst in the CP with a puzzled expression on his face and exclaimed, "What happened - where's everybody?"

Logchips Enters Germany

Then on the 3rd of December the outfit moved through the mud into positions into Germany proper around the little town of Wehingen. This was the first time the battalion had taken up position in Germany. This was quite a hot spot, both in the town itself, and all along the approaches to the town. Tunes were played on the tile roofs of the town every night by German 88's. "C" Battery claimed that the SPI's were being fired from positions almost on top of their own. However, the 88's were actually about 2000 yards away and were separated from "C" Battery by the Saar River.

Fortunately the stay in this town was short, and the outfit moved back into France in a little peaceful area around Flatten. The move, however, proved to be exciting for Capt. Castle and the motor section of Headquarters Battery. While repairing a washed out road for the battalion to pass over, they were suddenly taken under fire by German 88's and spent the rest of the afternoon in a muddy German anti-tank ditch. No casualties resulted.

From the 6th to the 22nd of December, the Fabins fired across the Saar; manned OP's overlooking Merzig and its surrounding towns; again worked with Task Force Polk, which was again thinly spread along the Saar River front.

ARDENNES

Back to Kirsch

In the middle of December while we were at Flatten we were ordered by Corps to send one battery to a designated area to assist in demonstrating the new Pozit time fuse. "C" Battery was selected and under cover of darkness and in a very heavy rain moved to the designated area. Lt. Cunningham decided to take a short-cut and finally after a 70 mile march by way of Metz arrived at the position, which actually was only 40 miles away.

Cold, damp weather was upon us now and Capt. Tracy and the medical detachment were snowed under by the great number of flu cases.

Another bit of dilemma struck the battalion at this time when we were ordered to transfer 40 men to the Infantry. Volunteers were called for and the necessary number received. We hated to see them leave, because we knew their job was to be a tough one. Also, with already depleted ranks our job became considerably more difficult.

We prepared to change positions for a coming large scale attack, but Jerry delayed our plans by beginning his offensive in the Ardennes. It was first thought that the attack was only a local affair, but we all felt the weight of it in two days. We were in constant fear of being overrun by two German Panzer divisions that were known to be facing us. On the 22nd of December the battalion moved back to Kirsch. There the winter was spent, and positions were occupied in adjacent towns until the 1st day of February 1945.

It was during this period that history was made all along the western front and Logchips contributed its part. The Battle of the Bulge--or perhaps we should say the southern flank--fell within reach of our Howitzers and some of the most famous German divisions found that facing the business end of a 155 mm Howitzer was a very effective means of committing suicide. It was on the 18th of January that we stopped the 11th Panzer Division cold--and we do mean cold. The snow was just about a foot deep and the temperature was hovering around the zero mark.

Long Days and Cold Weather

The OP crews were working in 12-hour shifts, day and night, from inside dug-outs overlooking the famous "Siegfried Switch". It was so cold they had to take the BC Scopes down and thaw them out occasionally in order to see through them. We knocked out "beaucoup" tanks on that day. The Cub crews, fire direction, and Howitzer crews were so busy that they could hardly find time to eat. The Fabs fired almost 1100 rounds, a new high for one day up to this time. The Germans used white tanks to blend with the snow and made our observers use every means imaginable to locate them.



Knocked-out German Tiger Tank

There were a few days and nights we didn't rest too well. Because of the imminent danger of attack, kitchen trucks spent 3 days in the rear areas. It was feared that perhaps the Germans would break through our defenses and force us to "advance" to the rear. The trucks and tractor motors were kept warm day and night, just in case we had to move in a hurry. Everyone was told to be very much on the alert for German tanks and parachutists. That was one order that was carried out to the fullest extent without having to be issued but once.

Corporal Pennick, while occupying one of the OP's, called the fire direction center and whispered that they were surrounded by an enemy patrol and that attempts were being made to get in the dug-out. "B" Battery was immediately notified to send some assistance to the OP. A check-up call to the OP disclosed that they had been in error about the patrol. A field mouse had found its way into the dug-out and was rustling in the straw and the sensitive ears of Cpl. Pennick had led him to believe that someone was on the snow outside.

Five separate positions were picked and "surveyed in" to the rear towards Thionville, in case they were needed. Detail plans were laid for a retrograde movement. It was our good fortune to never have to use them.

Christmas was spent in Kirsch, but the real dinner was delayed for several weeks. All available transportation was being used to haul gasoline and ammunition. To see truck loads of these items coming in at this time proved to be better than fancy chow. A Red Cross Clubmobile visited us on Christmas Eve and the coffee, donuts and conversation with American girls helped a lot to give us a few fleeting thoughts about Christmas. The Clubmobile had a narrow escape while on its way to visit us. As it passed through a town on the way to our position, the Germans shelled it and one shell struck barely 50 feet from the girls and their truck. They needed some hot coffee themselves when they reached our area.

Capt. Weightman, Capt. Green, the battalion maintenance section under Sergeant Adams and the remainder of the personnel of Service Battery are to be commended for their work during this period. Their trucks were on the go 24 hours a day hauling ammunition and gasoline. The men ate, slept, and lived

in their trucks as they jolted over the roads between the battalion position and gasoline and ammunition dumps.

The period from 22 December to 10 January once again saw the battalion supporting Task Force Polk. The 94th Infantry Division relieved TFP on 10 January, and we in turn switched our fires to the support of the 94th. This division was getting its first taste of combat, except for the seige of two German submarine bases at Lorient and St. Nazaire. These bases had been by-passed by the American troops at an early date. The 94th arrived with headlights ablaze and it was 24 hours before the jitters of the Fabins had subsided.

Snafu Air Corps Bombing



CP personnel watch as "A" Battery is bombed and machine gunned.
(L to R) - Bunyard, Woods, Powell, Smith, Banks, Merkel, Zacolla

It was while in position here that "A" Battery of our battalion and "B" Battery of the 733rd F.A. Battalion, which was attached to us for fire control at the time, were bombed by our own fighter aircraft. Two fighter planes made two runs

over the batteries. The first time they machine gunned the area and the second time each plane dropped 2 - 75 pound bombs. Several men were injured in the machine gunning, but our ack-ack shot down one plane. The pilot was not injured and upon questioning found that he had attacked his own troops. His explanation of the attack was that he thought he was east of the Saar River. Actually, he was west of the Saar and east of the Moselle. Official investigators swarmed the area for several days getting the details on this affair.

"B" Battery, 733rd Field Artillery Battalion, 155 mm guns (Long Toms) was attached to us for fire control. High performance aircraft (P-51 fighters) adjusted the fire of this battery on the city of Saarburg and many other choice targets. Saarburg was being used by the Germans as a supply base for their Ardennes offensive. The P-51's, also adjusted the fire of our Howitzers on targets at a slightly less range.

RHINELAND (2nd Phase)

Second Entry into Germany

On 1 February the battalion moved to Ober-Perl, Germany, which was our second entry into the Reich. All the Fabins sincerely hoped this crossing of the frontier wouldn't be so hotly contested as our first entry at Wehingen. The cold and snow was almost gone, and "General Mud" had again taken command. We were still in support of the 94th, and it seemed that the Division held some idea about cracking the Siegfried Line. The Krauts seemed to object to our being in this particular location and constantly harrassed us with 170 mm shell from the vicinity of Merzig, Germany. These 170's made quite a noise, so to prevent damage to our hearing, we stayed pretty close to cover. One round hit the building across the street from the CP and knocked several men down in the immediate area. No casualties resulted. Several other rounds landed in the vicinity of "B" Battery. Also, we received our first issue of flashless powder while here. The Germans had been using flashless powder for some time, but our howitzers always lit up the sky when we fired at night. It was a great comfort to watch our Howitzers fire at night using the new powder. We could hear them, but no flash was visible.

There was one flame, however, that did light up the sky while we were here. "C" Battery's kitchen blew up one night and set fire to the hay in an adjoining barn. Many Fabins rushed to the aid of "C" Battery, but it was morning before the fire was brought under control. Sergeant Meyer and Corporal Lawerence of "C" Battery were severely burned in the explosion. The barn and adjoining house were almost a total loss.

Another item of particular interest that was put to use about this time was the POZIT fuse. This radio controlled and

activated fuse proved to be a big advancement over the ordinary time fuse, which required detailed calculations and manual setting operations. Because of the danger to our observation planes and the difficulty in clearing the skies of them during the daytime these fuses were used mostly at night.

The Battalion remained at Ober-Perl until February 20 and continued to support the attacks of the 94th Division. A new high in firing was reached when the Fabins delivered 1834 rounds to the Krauts on the 19th of February. The entire stay at Ober-Perl was a very busy one; 1000 rounds per day was routine work.

Clean-Up of the Saar-Moselle Triangle

On February 19th the 94th finally realized their ambition and pushed on through the Siegfried Line under cover of a tremendous artillery barrage. The next day marked the beginning of the rapid cleanup of the Saar-Moselle Triangle. In planning the move to the next position Colonel Merkel objected to the assigned area because of the minimum elevation. Colonel Theimer asked: "Can't your Howitzers shoot out of a well?" The answer was: "Sure, if you put them in there, we'll fire them."

The next move was through Remich to Sinz for a one night stay. This place had received our attention for some time, and the town was in complete ruins from the effects of our artillery and the bombs of Mustangs and Thunderbolts. There was abundant evidence of the effects on men and vehicles from the tremendous number of mines the Germans had planted in this area. The firing batteries had an apprehensive time here, but their mine sweepers had done a good job and no casualties were suffered.

All will remember the gallant work of the 5th Ranger Battalion in this sector. Our forward observer parties accompanied the Rangers in a 12 mile infiltration. For several days this battalion was isolated. Then a plea came from them for aid in the form of ammunition and food. Lt. Meyer and Lt. Shell, our air jockeys, under heavy small arms fire, assisted in flying ammunition and food to these men.



Artillery observation plane. We had two of these at all times.

The 5th Ranger Battalion and all accompanying troops were awarded a Presidential Citation for this action according to Gen. Ord. No. 23, dated March 27, 1947. The 689th as a unit was not cited in this case, but all of our enlisted men and officers who were personally with the 5th Ranger Battalion during this action are included in the citation and are entitled to wear the award.

The long anticipated crossing of the Saar came on February 28th. Incidents connected with the crossing will long be remembered by some members of the Battalion. The Germans began shelling Irsch while our column was in the town, and as a result Corporal Childs and Sgt. Cole of Headquarters Battery, and Major Rappe were awarded Purple Hearts. Childs and Cole were evacuated to the hospital. Our reception following Irsch was no better. In the steep, hilly country east of the Saar, we were introduced to the unforgettable (and appropriately named) "Screaming Meemies". We also had the not-very-comforting privilege of being able to watch our own shells bursting. No one regretted leaving that position on March 4th to move on to Trier.

The reconnaissance parties traveled over "sky-line drive" to Trier and that evening the Germans recaptured a part of this road and for several hours captured or destroyed every

vehicle that came along. News of this action made it necessary for the battalion to move to Trier by a very poor and circuitous route.

Trier and the Drive to the Rhine

At Trier, once again we were to support the 10th Armored Division, but this time under the 193d FA Group and Colonel Cooney. Trier was indeed a welcome change. The guns were set up on lawns and everyone was happy to be quartered in the adjacent houses. Our stay in Trier was comparatively carefree, and the Fabins had an interesting time in this ancient and historical city.

All too soon our turn came to leave Trier. On March 8th we recrossed the Moselle and headed north with the 10th Armored for a brief time. Operations were difficult and bloody. After joining up with Yanks coming from the west, we turned around, came back through Trier, and went into positions east of the Saar once more poised for the rush to the Rhine. The City of



Trier, Germany. Every street was full of rubble and many were impassable.

Schweich had been declared an open city by the Germans, due to the many hospitals there. However, after the Americans were in the city, the Germans disregarded their request and continually fired on it.

We jockeyed around supporting the 80th and the 94th Infantry Divisions until such time as the armor could shake loose. On the 16th of March we were again attached to the 10th Armored and the dash to seal off the Saar Palatinate began. Positions were occupied and evacuated so quickly keeping up with the armor that it left only a blurred impression. We shuttled back and forth between the combat commands of the 10th Armored Division and at Kell fate again struck at the battalion. Private Crowell, "C" Battery, was killed and Sergeant Emmett, HQ Battery, was wounded by enemy counter-battery. Sergeant Emmett died about three weeks later at a General Hospital.

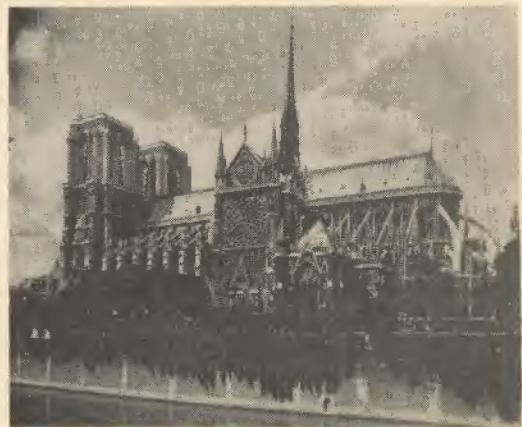
So many prisoners were being taken that it was not unusual to see great strings of Kraut PW's passing to our rear unguarded and utterly defeated. Near Kaiserslautern, the Fabins realized the devastating effect of our Tactical Air Force. Mile after mile of German vehicles, horses, and men were destroyed as they fled pell-mell toward the Rhine in a vain attempt to escape Patton's war machine.

A day after we occupied Asweiler, doughboys of the 3rd and 45th Divisions of the 7th Army came dashing in to take the town only to find the Fabins with their 155 Howitzers already firmly emplaced in the town. Following the link-up with the 7th Army on their home grounds, the territory west of the Rhine was deemed clear and our offensive ground to a temporary halt.

CENTRAL EUROPE

Rest Camp

Rest at last! At Rodalben, the cheering news came that at last we were to get a rest period. Our first rest since landing at Normandy turned out to be two days of washing



Notre Dame

Eiffel Tower

PARIS SCENES

vehicles and polishing up equipment. Liaison planes were sent back to Lebach for bogie wheels and the area was thoroughly searched for German soldiers. Three of the towns in this area had not been previously searched and 20 prisoners were taken. On the 26th of March we gladly forsook our "rest area" and girded ourselves for battle again.

For relief from the steady grind of combat a few men were kept on pass all of the time. The most popular place to visit was Paris and more passes were issued for there than anywhere else. Planned tours gave all who visited the city an opportunity to see and visit the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame, the Louvre, Arch de Triomphe, Fontainbleau, Versailles, and many other places of world wide interest.

We Join the 6th Armored Division

On the 27th of March we supported the 80th Infantry Division in its attack across the Rhine. After a temporary assignment to the 11th Armored Division, we were given the mission of supporting the 6th Armored Division. About 0230 on March 29th, we crossed the Rhine at Oppenheim (just south of Mainz) and proceeded on our first task east of the Rhine—catching the 6th Armored.

History was now moving too fast for records. Swinging north from Frankfurt, the Battalion followed close on the heels of the tank spearhead in a drive for Kassel. Adolph's famous project, the Reichs Autobahn, provided good footing for the drive. Due to heavy resistance in Kassel the 80th Division took over the mission of capturing the city. The 6th Armored's drive turned east. Driving was no fun. The long, rainy nights we marched through will not soon be forgotten. On one such night, Tiger tanks that had been by-passed, summed up their courage and tried passing our column—much to their regret.

At Struth the Battalion went into position and prepared to fire on Mulhausen, but it wasn't necessary. The Germans were too disorganized to put up much resistance. However, a very exciting incident occurred just after we left Struth. A large force of German armor tried to withdraw after seeing some of our supply vehicles in the town and proceeded to destroy them and retake the town. A Combat Command had to be dispatched back to Struth to repel the Krauts.

At this area we ran across the 687th FA Battalion, one of our sister battalions of Fort Sill days. Many short visits were enjoyed in the few hours we were near one another. Later information disclosed that the 687th lost 6 men, just after we left, when the Germans attacked Struth.

The headlines of the Stars and Stripes at this time read "6th Armored 137 miles from Berlin!" The little town of Grossengottern southeast of Mulhausen looked like a good resting place; so the Battalion pulled in for a halt. German warehouses in this area were discovered to be full of cherries, jam, and all sorts of food--plus cognac. Some of the Fabins were required to reduce their Class E allotments after a few days of revelry. It was noteworthy at this time that the non-existent Luftwaffe (it said in the papers from the US) had been making appearances over our columns, but now they began bothering us a little more than ever.

We had been in this area only a short time when word was received that a train load of Volkswagons and a factory full of trailers were near by. In no time at all, the battalion had acquired 17 Volkswagons and many trailers.

With regret, we left Grossengottern and moved up to the next town of Lancensalza where the 6th Armored captured an airfield intact. The .50 calibers were kept hot almost constantly. The sky was so full of lead and bursting 40mm that at times it was hardly safe to get out from under cover. One evening a lone German fighter flew over the city and was promptly shot down. The pilot bailed out and 90% of the American troops in the area took off to capture him.

The anti-personnel bombs on their little parachutes became a familiar sight as they floated down to earth. "B" Battery experienced a rough time here and two men received nasty wounds from them.

Finally, however (it seemed like a long time to the impatient Fabins), the stage was set by the 76th Division, and the 6th Armored pushed off and we resumed the offensive. This time we were headed for Dresden and wouldn't stop until we reached Stalin and his cohorts. The Krauts were getting desperate. Their remaining Air Force was sent out in strength only to be continually knocked down. The sound of an airplane didn't always mean our own Air Force over our heads; therefore, we always looked twice to be sure. Innumerable liberated PW's of all allied nations choked the roads in their exodus to the rear. It was on April 11th that one of our Cub planes piloted by Lieutenant Meyer was shot down while patrolling the column,



One of the route markers used by the 6th Armored Division

seriously wounding Lieutenant Meyer and killing the observer, Lieutenant Moore. This unpleasant incident served to remind us there was still a war going on and casualties could be expected. The 6th Armored rolled through a column of dust by day and the route could be seen for miles at night by the light of burning buildings and hay stacks set afire to mark the way.

As we approached the City of Zeitz, resistance stiffened for some unknown reason. Then it was discovered that this was the scene of Germany's great synthetic oil plants. Sixty-five 88's were taken by the 6th Armored in a two day period. It was a thrilling sight one day to see the P-47's swoop down, loose their rockets, and knock out a battery of 88's that was firing flak in an attempt to get the ground troops.

A wild sixty-five mile ride followed, and we slid to a stop at the little town of Frankenau, some 20 miles north of Chemnitz. To our disappointment we learned that there would be no link-up with the Russians just now, and the Battalion was scheduled to leave our battle partners, the 6th Armored Division, and take up another mission elsewhere. We had covered more than 350 miles with the Division and really regretted leaving such a fine outfit. Our route had taken us 20 miles south of Leipzig and we were now only 32 miles west of Dresden.

For four hours we were in general support of the 76th Division in an attack on Chemnitz. We were detached from this division before the attack was made.

Wild Rides and Confusion

The Fabins were thoroughly convinced that no road march could be too tough for the battle hardened outfit, but the 24 hour march that followed over every kind of road from Autobahn to the narrow winding trails leading into southern Germany, and a good portion of it through the blackest of black nights, made us realize there was a limit to human endurance. Bivouacs and indecisions followed--what Division would we support and what would be their mission?--no one knew. Finally, on April 20th, acting as troop transports for the 65th Division we moved out for the front. The mission of the XX Corps was to push south into Bavaria and Austria and, as usual, the Battalion was to help spearhead.

The 65th was a new Division in combat and seemed to run into all sorts of trouble which worried the Fabins consider-



The bridge built for light cavalry scout cars, but we put our 13 ton Howitzers and 13 ton tractors over it.

ably. So the news that we were to again support the 80th Division was received with pleasure.

The "Beautiful Blue Danube" lay in the path of advance. The 65th Division made a bridgehead across the famous river, but immediately became bogged down. The 80th Division passed through the 65th and continued the advance. However, before crossing the Danube, a small flooded creek lay in the path of advance of the Fabins. A cavalry outfit had built a light floating bridge across the stream the day before for the use of their light vehicles. Some light artillery had used the bridge with fair success and orders were issued for the 689th to use it too.

Lieutenant Good and Lieutenant Cunningham have their own stories on how they fared with their 13 ton prime movers and Howitzers at this crossing. The password from then on between those two was, "Hooooold It". It seemed that all the brass from the Corps Artillery Commander down was there to boss the job and "raise hell" in general with the two battery executives who were trying to "float" their Howitzers across the stream. "A" Battery headed for another crossing and later in the day word was received from Corps Artillery Headquarters "to get those Howitzers out of that area and get them back with the battalion". By the time they returned to the crossing the engineers had built a substantial bridge and "A" Battery joined the battalion. On the 29th of April the battalion rolled across the Danube with dry wheels.

Mopping Up Operations

It was evident now that the Germans were thoroughly disorganized and beaten, still they continued to resist. The newspapers in the US were going wild! With two inch headlines they proclaimed that V-E Day was imminent; however, we were still skeptical. Those headlines had appeared in the papers before, but apparently the Krauts had not read them.

The only major slow-down point in the drive from the Danube to the Austrian border occurred at Dingolfing on the Isar River. The Germans had blown the bridge at that point and the 80th Infantry Division and the 13th Armored Division were

concentrated there waiting for a pontoon bridge to be completed. Captain Dunlap located an old stone bridge about one mile below Dingolfing. The 80th Division crossed it immediately and we followed.



Blown-up bridge across the Isar River at Dingolfing, Germany.

The Battalion rolled on and on May 3d arrived at a little place called Eggstetten, just across the Inn River from Branaeu, Austria--the birthplace of Adolph Hitler. As usual, the Battalion commenced registering, but was cut short by a radio message from Group to cease all firing immediately. Speculation soared. Was this "IT"? Had the end come? There was nothing to do but sweat it out. On May 5 we were ordered to send 17 two and one-half ton empty trucks to transport infantry in a fast attempt to cover the remaining distance between the Americans and the Russians. Finally, on May 7th a radio announcement was made that tomorrow there would be a proclamation. Many of the Fabins had saved a certain item for several months just for V-E Day, but the temptation was too great and out it came a day early and vanished over night.

V-E Day

May 8, 1945 -- Who remembers that famous day and year?

The war in Europe was over. On May 9th a battalion formation was held, at which time, the Battalion heard the official proclamation read announcing the end of hostilities in Europe. May 12th was proclaimed officially as V-E Day. Another feature of May 9th was a church service held for all members of the Battalion.



The Battalion church service following the reading of the V-E Day Proclamation, which proclaimed the end of the war in Europe.

THE ARMY OF OCCUPATION

We Want To Go Home

The end of the shooting didn't mean that we were all to head for the Atlantic Coast and get the next ship for home. We had a big job of cleaning up ourselves and our equipment. Our biggest job, however, was to take care of German PW's and displaced persons.



Bayrischzell, Germany in the foreground with the beautiful, rugged Alps looming all around.

We were moved to Freising, Germany, near Munich. Here we were given the job of guarding several displaced persons camps. These camps contained Russians, Frenchmen, Italians and others. Normally, Freising was a city of 25,000, but now it contained 60,000 persons. The job was a pain in the neck and

we were glad when orders came transferring us to Bayrischzell. Here we had to guard hospitals and patrol a given sector. The Germans in these hospitals proved to be the crack SS troops who had been injured in combat. This area, in the heart of the Alps, was the most beautiful part of France and Germany that we had seen. The snow capped mountains, the quaint Bavarian homes and people in their native dress were of interest to all. Several caches of arms and ammunition were discovered in our search of the area. Himmler's hunting lodge was one of the buildings taken over by the Battalion for quarters.

Many took trips to Berchtesgaden, the Brenner Pass and other points of interest.

Transfers and Good-Byes

On July 5, 1945, the officers and men of the Battalion were scattered to the four winds. The shuffle of personnel left very few in the 689th, because it was designated a low point battalion and most of the members of the battalion had the 85 needed for discharge.

The battalion personnel section under the direction of Mister Aycock and Sergeant Slice had a tremendous job in finishing up records that had to go with the men. Working conditions for these men had been very bad ever since leaving Court-Y-Gollen, but here at Bayrischzell surroundings were more convenient and agreeable.

Many times since arriving in France these men had to be left behind when the battalion moved forward because of lack of transportation. Mister Aycock, Sergeant Slice and the members of the personnel section are to be commended for the excellent way in which they carried out their assigned duties under difficult and adverse conditions.

We hated to break up after having been together for such a long time and having gone through lots of tough spots together. However, our main thoughts were of getting home and we said our "good-byes" and moved on.



Our last CP. Bayrischzell, Germany

This ends the tale of the trials and tribulations of the 689th Field Artillery Battalion in the European Theater of Operations. The men who fought under her banner were in the war to get a job done. They feel that they did their share in completing the job, and are hoping their efforts were not in vain.

POST SCRIPT

War Department records show that the 689th Field Artillery Battalion was returned to this country and inactivated at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, on 23 December 1945. All residual assets, together with terminal audit of funds, were remitted to the Army Central Welfare Fund, War Department, Washington 25, D. C.

COMMENDATIONS

HEADQUARTERS
THE ARTILLERY CENTER
FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA

18 December 1947

To The Members of The 689th FA Battalion

From 28 August 1944, when the 689th FA Battalion joined the XX Corps Artillery in France to the end of hostilities in Austria 8 May 1945, your performance on the field of battle proved your ability as artillerymen.

The victorious battles and campaigns of the XX Corps, of the Third US Army in which the 689th FA Battalion participated will be forever memorable to all of you. During the Reduction of Metz; the Defense of the Saar River and Saarlautern Bridgehead; the Breakthrough in the Saar-Moselle Triangle and Capture of Trier; the Uncovering of the Siegfried Line (Saarburg Area) and the Pursuit through the Palatinate; the Crossing of the Rhine and sweep into Germany; and the Crossing of the Danube River - you played your part well as members of a winning team.

Your unqualified devotion to duty, inimitable spirit and enthusiasm were evident to all who knew you. May your spirit and resoluteness continue to guide each and every one of you during peace.

You have every right to be justly proud of your fine combat record. I am indeed more proud and gratified to have had the 689th FA Battalion in my command during combat.

(s) J. E. SLACK
Colonel GSC (FA)

HEADQUARTERS 65th DIVISION ARTILLERY

APO 200, U. S. ARMY

REGENSBURG, GERMANY
29 April 1945

SUBJECT: Performance of 193d FA Group

TO: Commanding General, XX Corps Artillery (Thru Channels)

1. It is desired to express appreciation for the excellent cooperation and performance of the 193d FA Group, its commander, Colonel Cooney, and his staff, and the battalions attached during the period 20-28 April inclusive, when this organization was reinforcing the fires of the 65th Division Artillery.

2. Not only did the group and its battalions cooperate and coordinate their efforts with those of the division artillery, in a series of varying organizations for combat, such as to be virtually indistinguishable from the organic battalions, but the road discipline, organization of position, aggressiveness, speed of fire, and all-round performance of the separate battalions was uniformly superior and a credit to the best artillery standards.

3.

4. This command anticipates with pleasure the possibility of working with the 193d Group in future engagements.

(s) RONALD C. BROCK,
Brig. Gen., USA;
Commanding

1st Ind.

HQ 65TH INF DIV, APO 200 U. S. Army

1 May 1945

TO: Commanding General, XX Corps, APO 340 U. S. Army

I am pleased to note and forward this commendation.

(s) S. E. REINHART
Major General, U. S. Army
Commanding

2nd Ind.

HEADQUARTERS XX CORPS
APO 340, U. S. ARMY

6 May 1945

TO: Commanding General, XX Corps Artillery,
APO 340, U. S. Army.

I desire to add my own commendation to that of the Commanding General, 65th Division Artillery, for the outstanding performance rendered by the 193d Field Artillery Group during this period.

(s) WALTON H. WALKER,
Lt. General, U. S. Army,
Commanding

5th Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 689th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 403, U.S. ARMY

15 May 1945

3rd Ind.

HEADQUARTERS XX CORPS ARTILLERY
APO 340, U. S. Army

11 May 1945

TO: Commanding Officer, 193rd FA Group,
APO 340, U. S. Army.

It is with gratification and pleasure
that I forward this commendation. The 193rd Field
Artillery Group has consistently performed in an
outstanding manner, particularly in its reinforcing
role to various divisions throughout the entire
operations of this command.

(s) J. E. SLACK,
Brig. Gen., U. S. Army,
Commanding

4th Ind.

HEADQUARTERS 193rd FIELD ARTILLERY GROUP
APO 340, U. S. ARMY

13 May 1945

TO: CO, 176th Bn, 284th FA Bn, 689th FA Bn,
Hq Btry 193rd FA Group.

1. Forwarded with pleasure.

2. I wish to extend my sincere grati-
tude to you and members of your command for willing
and splendid cooperation in the performance of all
assigned tasks.

(s) H. A. COONEY,
Colonel, FA
Commanding

TO: Commanding Officers, Hq. Btry, "A" Btry, "B" Btry,
"C" Btry, Service Btry, 689th F.A. Bn.

1. The above commendation is forwarded
with pleasure and personal knowledge of a job well
done.

2. The general spirit of cooperation
and performance of the officers and men of the
battalion has consistently been exceedingly high,
for which I extend my personal thanks.

(s) GEORGE C. MERKEL
Lieutenant Colonel, FA
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS XX CORPS

APO 340

10 June 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: All Units Assigned or Attached to XX Corps.

1. It gives me great pleasure to publish to the Command, the following letter which was handed to Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker, by the Commanding General, Third United States Army, upon his departure from Europe:

"HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY

Office of the Commanding General

APO 403

21 May 1945

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO: Lieutenant General Walton H. Walker.

From the landing of the XX Corps in England until the termination of hostilities in Europe, you and your Corps have been outstanding for dash, drive, and audacity in pursuit and in exploitation.

Your determination and great tactical skill were evinced in your capture of Metz and subsequent advance to the Saar and capture of Saarlautern.

Your reduction of the Moselle-Saar Triangle and the capture of Trier was a brilliant feat of arms. The operation starting March 13 and terminating May 9, during which you turned the Siegfried Line, destroyed the center of enemy resistance, and crossed the Rhine, finally terminating your victorious advance in Austria, were in keeping with your previous exploits and standards.

Of all the Corps I have commanded, yours has always been the most eager to attack and the most reasonable and cooperative.

You and your Corps are hereby highly commended for your outstanding achievements.

(s) G. S. PATTON, JR.,
General."

2. General Walker has sent this letter from the United States with the remark that this commendation was earned by the officers and enlisted men of the XX Corps, rather than by himself.

3. I know that the XX Corps will continue to maintain these high standards attained by the constant effort and devotion to duty of each officer, warrant officer and enlisted man.

(s) LOUIS A. CRAIG
Major Gen., U. S. Army,
Commanding

20 February 1948

-TO THE MEN OF THE 689th FA BATTALION-

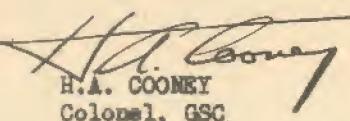
It is with deep feeling of pride and gratitude that I recall our service and experiences together in combat at Thionville and throughout the Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns and later after V-E day at Bayrischzell.

The willing cooperation, team-work and spirit of comradeship which constantly existed between you and the members of the 193d FA Group will never be forgotten. Our close associations on the battlefields of Europe is full of vivid and cherished memories.

Your determination to see a job well done, your aggressive spirit, fortitude, high sense of duty and loyal cooperation were ever present. You took every assigned task in stride and no task was too great or too difficult for prompt and effective accomplishment. The splendid record of the 689th FA Battalion is an enviable one and one in which each of you may justly be proud.

No group commander has been more privileged than I in having under his command such an outstanding battalion as the 689th. Words cannot express my sincere personal pride in claiming combat service with the 689th as a battalion of my group throughout the major part of the past war.

As we pursue our chosen field of work in peace, may the friendship and comradeship borne through our service together in war be everlasting in the future years to come.


H.A. COONEY
Colonel, GSC

THE FOLLOWING IS AN ARTICLE TAKEN FROM THE NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE, DATED 1 OCT. 1944

ARMY REVEALS "GHOST CORPS" SAGA IN FRANCE

Mysterious Column That Sped Across Nation Was Walker's XX Corps.
WITH GENERAL PATTON'S ARMY.

The secrecy which for weeks has surrounded the mysterious "GHOST CORPS" was lifted today, revealing Major General Walton H. Walker's XX Corps as the spearhead of Lieutenant General George S. Patton's Third Army's great eastward drive across France, distinguished by bold tactics of encirclement which won Prime Minister Churchill's praise in Parliament the other day.

Within fifteen days General Walker led his corps across six rivers -- the Loire, Seine, Vesle, Marne, Aisne, and the Meuse -- to liberate scores of towns and cities, including Chartres, Melun, Montereau, Fontainebleau, Chateau-Thierry, Epernay, Reims, and Verdun. The corps' speed was such that it thrust through the Argonne Forest in a matter of hours, as compared with several months required to take these woods in World War I.

At one place the armored columns of the XX Corps, knifed through the enemy's defenses with such force and speed that staff officers of a high German Headquarters scrambled out of their mess hall and joined the fleeing troops to avoid capture. Their untouched food was still hot when the hungry Americans moved in.

Incessantly pushing the Germans back and off balance, the XX Corps, captured or destroyed 200 enemy tanks, 350 personnel carriers, 500 guns of large caliber, eighty planes, and ninety vehicles. Enemy troops killed or captured exceeded 20,000.

VITAL STATISTICS

689TH F. A. BATTALION

Guns Neutralized or Destroyed	316
Tanks Destroyed or Disabled	52
Pillboxes Knocked Out	21
Troop Concentrations Broken Up	51
Vehicles Knocked Out	55
Counter Attacks Broken Up	24
Enemy CP's Knocked Out	17
Enemy CP's Destroyed	3
Railroad Stations Destroyed	1
Bridges Destroyed	4
Barges Destroyed	3
Mine Fields Blown Up	4
Enemy Mess Halls Destroyed	2
Ammunition Dumps Blown Up	2
Machine Guns Knocked Out	1

Total distance traveled by the Battalion from Utah Beach to Eggstetten, Germany, where the war ended -- 4,000 miles.

Total rounds fired in the Battalion -- 48,707

A Battery	15,920
B Battery	16,588
C Battery	16,199

C Battery fired the first and last rounds in the Battalion. The first round was fired at a German tank and the last one was fired on a registration.

RIVERS CROSSED BY THE BATTALION

These rivers are listed in the order crossed and some of them have been crossed two or three times.

	Essonnes	Marne	Moselle	Main	Saale
Mayenne	Loing	Aisne	Saar	Nidda	Weisse-Elster
Sarthe	Yonne	Aire	Nahe	Fulda	Mulde
Huisne	Seine	Meuse	Rhine	Werra	Danube

AUTHORIZED BATTLE STARS

The 689th Field Artillery Battalion has been named in official army orders as participating in the following campaigns:

NORTHERN FRANCE

July 25, 1944 to September 14, 1944

Authorized by General Orders No. 103, dated November 13, 1945

RHINELAND

September 15, 1944 to March 21, 1945

Authorized by General Orders No. 118, dated December 12, 1945

ARDENNES

December 16, 1944 to January 25, 1945

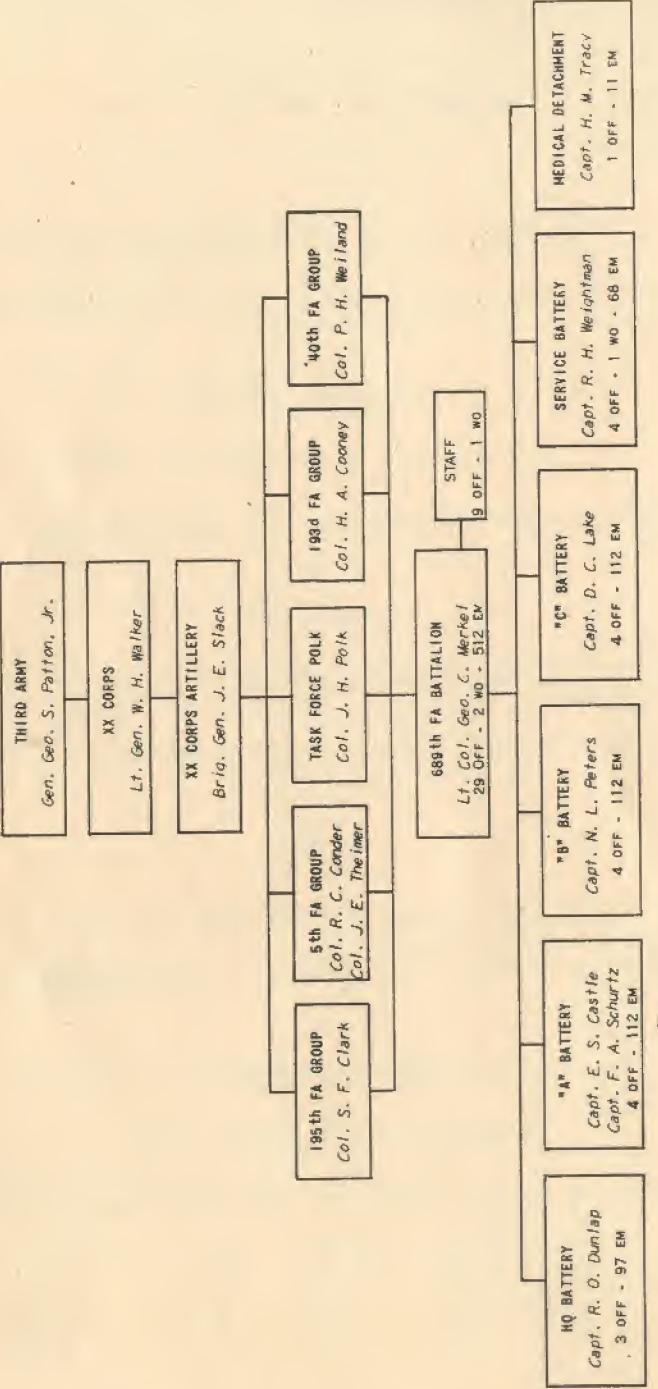
Authorized by General Orders No. 114, dated December 7, 1945

CENTRAL EUROPE

March 22, 1945 to May 11, 1945

Authorized by General Orders No. 116, dated December 11, 1945

CHAIN OF COMMAND - 689th FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION



LOCATION AND ASSIGNMENT INFORMATION

689TH F.A. BATTALION

LOCATION	DATE	ATTACHED TO	SUPPORTED
Fort Sill, Okla.	6 Oct. 43	18th FA Group	Training Period
Camp Iron Mountain, Calif.	10 Oct. 43	XV Corps	AGF Tests
Camp Polk, La.	4 Mar 44	XXI Corps	Training Period
Camp Miles Standish, Mass.	26 June 44	part of Embarkation	"
Wakefield	1 July 44	Crossing Atlantic	"
Court-Y-Gollen, Wales	10 July 44	177th FA Group	"
Court-Y-Gollen, Wales	18 Aug 44	"	Port of Embarkation
Southampton, England	24 Aug 44	XX Corps Arty	Arrival in France
Utah Beach, France	25 Aug 44	195th FA Group	Chasing the 195th FA Group
St. Mars	25 Aug 44	"	"
Cloves	27 Aug 44	"	"
Namours	28 Aug 44	"	"
Herme	28 Aug 44	"	"
Mont Mort	29 Aug 44	"	"
Constantine	30 Aug 44	"	"
Puisieux	31 Aug 44	"	"
Juoy	1 Sept 44	"	"
Fromerville	3 Sept 44	"	"
Dugny	6 Sept 44	"	"
Ville	8 Sept 44	"	"
Fleville			90th Infantry Division

Mancieulles	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Trieux	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Fontoy	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Jouaville	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Jouaville	14 Sept. 44	12 Sept. 44	14 Sept. 44	23 Sept. 44	24 Sept. 44	29 Sept. 44	13 Oct. 44	27 Oct. 44	4 Nov. 44
Vittonville	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Vittonville	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Welfrange, Luxembourg	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Hettange Grande, France	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Briestroff	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Fort near Sentzich	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Lagrange	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Hunting	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Kemplich	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Kirsch-less-Sirck	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Ritzing	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Wehingen, Germany	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Flatten, France	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Kirsch	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Ober-Perl, Germany	10 Jan. 45	1 Feb. 45	1 Feb. 45	6 Dec. 44	9 Dec. 44	22 Dec. 44	10 Jan. 45	27 Nov. 44	29 Nov. 44
Sinz	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
Weiten	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"

78

SUPPORTED

ATTACHED TO

DATE

LOCATION	DATE	ATTACHED TO	SUPPORTED
Pillbox near Irsch	28 Feb. 45	5th FA Group	94th Inf. Div.
Trier	4 Mar. 45	193rd FA Group	10th Arm'd. Div.
Quint	8 Mar. 45	"	"
Fehren	10 Mar. 45	"	"
Obereimel	11 Mar. 45	"	"
Greimerath	15 Mar. 45	"	94th Inf. Div.
Keil	16 Mar. 45	"	80th Inf. Div.
Hermeskeil	17 Mar. 45	"	10th Arm'd. Div.
Nonnweiler	17 Mar. 45	"	"
Obersottern	18 Mar. 45	"	"
Asweiler	18 Mar. 45	"	"
Hauersweiler	19 Mar. 45	"	"
Konken	20 Mar. 45	"	"
Mehlingen (Bivouac)	21 Mar. 45	"	"
Steinalben,	22 Mar. 45	"	"
Rodalben	24 Mar. 45	"	"
Hefersweiler	26 Mar. 45	"	"
Sprendlingen	"	"	Rehabilitation period
Ober Ingelheim	27 Mar. 45	"	Assembly area
(Enroute to Rhine)	28 Mar. 45	"	80th Inf. Div.
"	29 Mar. 45	"	11th Arm'd. Div.
Hebel	30 Mar. 45	"	6th Arm'd. Div.
Heider Mollrich	1 Apr. 45	"	"
Kirchhof	2 Apr. 45	"	"
Vockeroede	3 Apr. 45	"	"

Army of Occupation

ROUT

ENGLAND

- 1-Court-Y-Gollen 10 July 1944
- 2-Crickhowell
- 3-Abergavenny
- 4-Cardiff



689TH F.

10 JULY

ENGLISH CHANNEL



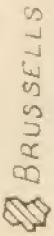
FRA

PARIS

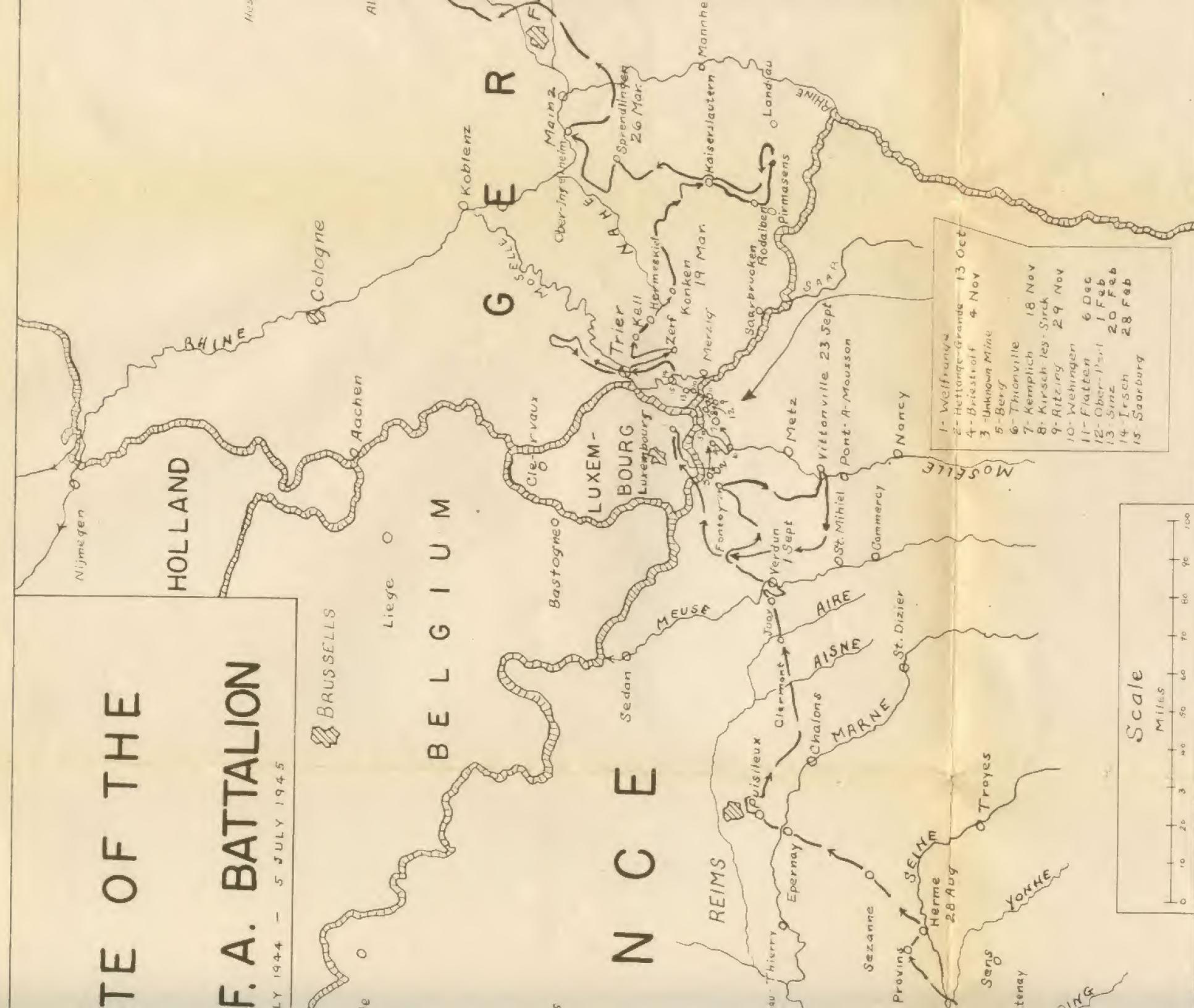
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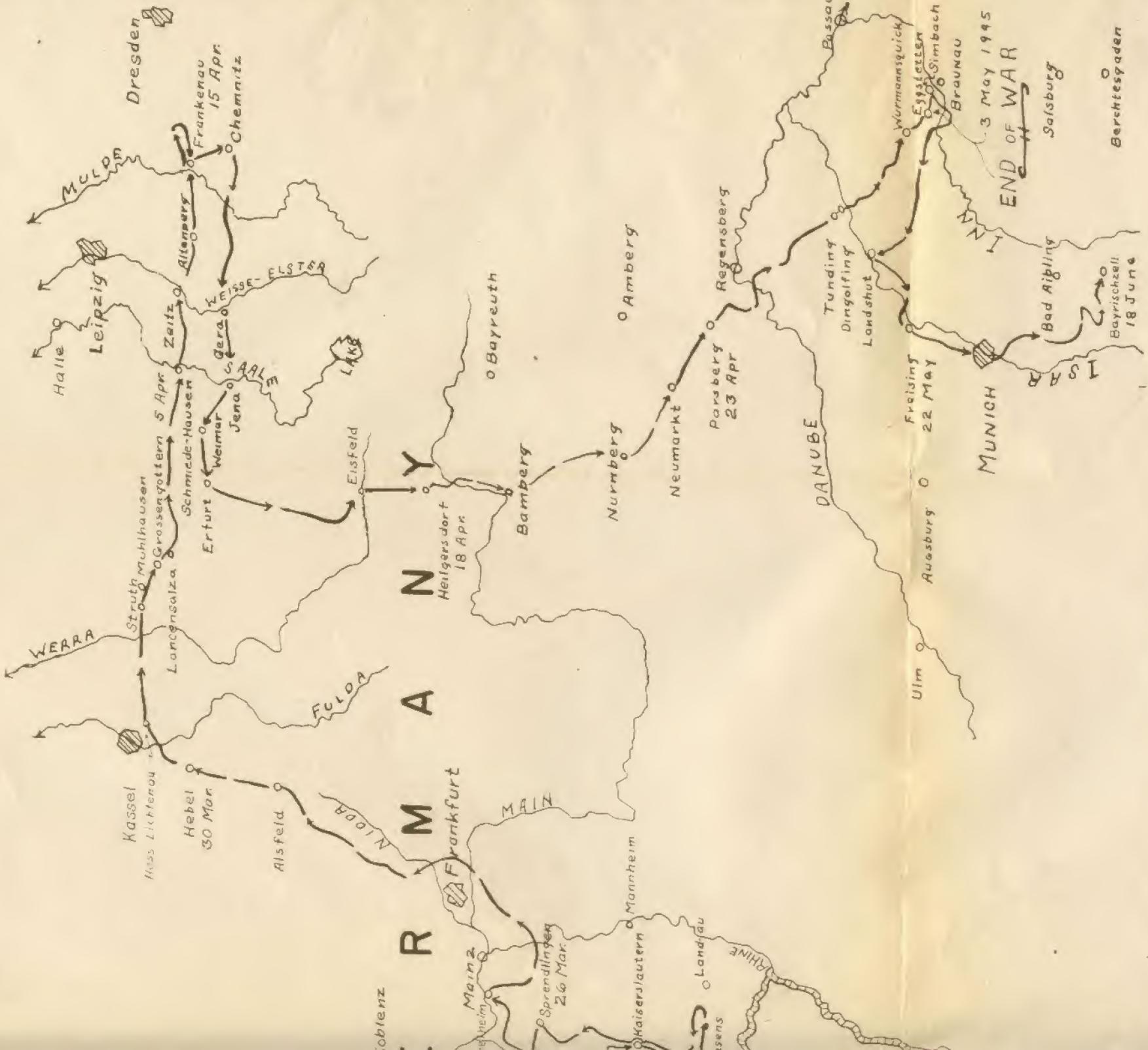
F. A. BATTALION

JULY 1944 - 5 JULY 1945



B E L G I U M





Desert park to preserve imprint of Patton's armor

By CHARLES HILLINGER
LA Times-Washington Post Service

IRON MOUNTAIN, Calif. — The immense maze of rock-lined footpaths and dirt roads forms an eerie pattern on the hot desert floor amid the cactuses and creosote shrubs.

Bands of 3- to 6-inch-deep World War II tank tracks crisscross the arid landscape as far as the eye can see.

They are the reminders that here, at the center of a 16,200-square-mile desert tract that stretches from Indio, Calif., into Arizona and Nevada, Gen. George S. Patton Jr. prepared his troops for a clash in North Africa with the armored legions of German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, the "Desert Fox."

It was here that Patton told his troops he would like to challenge Rommel to one-on-one tank combat.

"The two armies could watch. I'd be in one tank, Rommel in another. I'd shoot at him. He'd shoot at me. If I killed him I would be champ. If he killed me ... well, he won't," Patton mused.

Sixty thousand tankers, infantry and artillerymen trained in the Southern California desert from March until October 1942. Then Patton broke camp. On Nov. 8, 1942, the general and his men landed in North Africa.

Etched on the desert here to this day is the dramatic

imprint of Patton and his 1st Armored Corps, the incredible rock work created by soldiers laboring under scorching sun in one of the loneliest spots in America.

Rock patterns form company insignias and emblems. Millions of rocks outline the location of tent cities, parking lots, hospitals, mess halls, compounds, supply areas, chapels, paths and roads.

Every desert plant within the camp in 1942 and still thriving today is ringed with rocks, for when the troops were between maneuvers, Patton put them to work gathering rocks, then bordering everything in sight with stones.

A gigantic relief map the size of a football field also has weathered the passage of time. It was used to plot maneuvers and includes mountains, valleys, the Colorado River and the Salton Sea.

Now the U.S. Bureau of Land Management is planning to create a Patton memorial park at the Iron Mountain camp site, about 200 miles from Los Angeles.

"Seven years ago the bureau constructed a 2½-mile-long fence around the Iron Mountain camp to prevent vehicles from damaging and destroying the amazing rock work," said Everell G. Hayes, 35, manager of the bureau's Needles Resources Area, during a visit to the remote campsite.

"We want to build an access road enabling the public to visit Iron Mountain camp. We plan to establish a self-guided trail through the camp with interpretive displays explaining what transpired here."

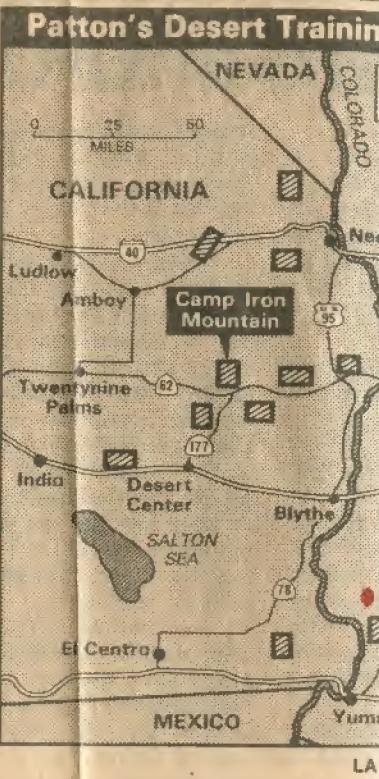
The bureau is asking World War II soldiers who trained with Patton and the thousands of others who were stationed at the desert outpost after the 1st Armored Division left for Africa to send it information about their experiences.

"We hope men who were stationed here during World War II will write to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (901 3rd St., Needles, Calif. 92363) and describe what daily living conditions were like, including anecdotes," said Debbie Paxton, 28, bureau visitor information specialist working on the project.

"We are seeking photographs of the period and ask that the pictures be identified — what they show, when and where they were taken. We will copy the photos and return them."

The material will be used for displays and for preparing brochures and booklets about the Desert Training Center.

The drive to establish the park coincides with the approach of the 100th anniversary of Patton's birth, Nov. 11, 1885.



ark to preserve imprint of Patton's armor

The immense maze of roads forms an eerie pattern amid the cactuses and creosote bushes.

World War II tank tracks are still here, at the center of a pattern that stretches from Indio, Calif., to Needles, Ariz. Gen. George S. Patton clashed in North Africa with German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.

"If his troops he would like to catch me, he'd be in one tank combat."

"I'd be in one tank, catch him. He'd shoot at me. If he killed me ... well,

infantry and artillerymen left California desert from March 1942. On Nov. 8, they broke camp. On Nov. 11, they landed in North Africa. What followed to this day is the dramatic

imprint of Patton and his 1st Armored Corps, the incredible rock work created by soldiers laboring under scorching sun in one of the loneliest spots in America.

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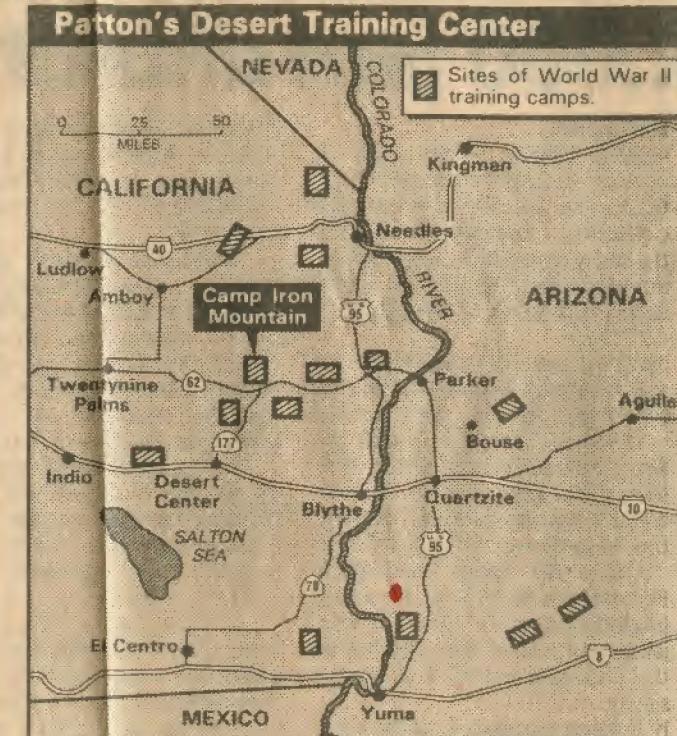
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LA Times-Washington Post Service